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Intelligence: Two Requirements

Admiral Stansfield Turner encountered only smooth sailing in his voyage toward Senate confirmation as director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Having been confirmed, he now finds himself in somewhat choppy waters.

Turner comes to his assignment in the midst of a new round of concern over CIA activities. At the same time, the question of confidentiality in intelligence matters is being freshly addressed — in particular by President Carter, who has expressed shock at the number of people in Washington privy to highly secret intelligence information.

This is indisputably a cause for concern. Yet anxiety about possible leaks

must be balanced against another consideration: the need to guard against the sort of abuses so much in the news over the past couple of years.

The flap over CIA payment of large sums to Jordan's King, Hussein and perhaps to other foreign leaders points up the contending values involved: concern about leaks, matched by concern about the possibility of dubious activities being carried on without hindrance or scrutiny. Mr. Carter wants Congress to settle for one joint oversight committee. This might be acceptable. But it is equally important that Turner's pledge be honored: to provide Congress with "full and timely information on CIA covert action and clandestine collection programs."